

Interview Excerpts

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by Md. Khalid Perwez

What do you attribute this growth in telecom to?

For years together in India telecom was a government monopoly, so there were lots of constraints of investment. But there was already a huge latent demand. Everybody in India used to get years to get a telephone

line. So, when economy opened up after government adopted liberal policies, the mobile telephone sector grew so high that everybody was taken by surprise. Earlier the mobile telephony was used for security agencies, police, etc but new technology made it possible for masses to use mobile technology. And mobile today is not merely a telecommunication tool, it is a tool for any applications one can conceive of: video, diary, memory book, TV, camera, photograph and broadcast and most importantly, now it is more of a tool for empowerment to the lowest person on the street

Recently Crisil reported lack of quality of service because network capacity is not keeping pace with mobile usage. Comment

Every company has its own business model. And it is not reasonable to expect that everybody should grow as fast. As far as quality of service is concerned, it is dependent on the various factors. We are in the process of growth so it will improve over a period of time. Anyway, quality of service is being monitored regularly by TRAI

Why are there lacunae in mobile manufacturing in India?

Manufacturing has not grown as fast as the mobile services. There was a question of need at a given time. When we opened up there was a vast need for mobile sets. So the government in its wisdom thought to allow import and it signed world trade agreement to import duty free mobile sets. And accordingly, it resulted in the fast import of mobile hand sets. However, recently things have started changing. India is now the second largest mobile market in India. And Nokia has set up the largest factory in the world in Chennai. Lots of other companies like Videocone and Onida are also setting up manufacturing facility. You cannot see the mobile hand set market in India in isolation. We are an open market. So there will always be global market consideration.

What growth do you see in broadband and internet? Speed is still a big question mark which perhaps coming in the way of growth?

A: We are hungry for more data, more speed, better quality, but at the same time do not want to pay more. But because of our hunger we will see growth in the broadband in wireless segment, not in the fixed line. However, new and technologically-advanced mobile handset like iPhone has put the tremendous pressure on the telecommunication operator.

What opportunities do you see for MBAs in telecom?

Opportunities for MBAs fall into so many categories like marketing, finance, project planning, business planning etc. Now Indian telecom companies are entering outside market, so there are opportunities for MBAs with a focus on global economy.

Self employment opportunities are also there for MBAs. But the mind set has to change in relation to self-employment. It is possible to set up small scale business in telecom manufacturing or set up an application-oriented value added services which have huge potential in the future.

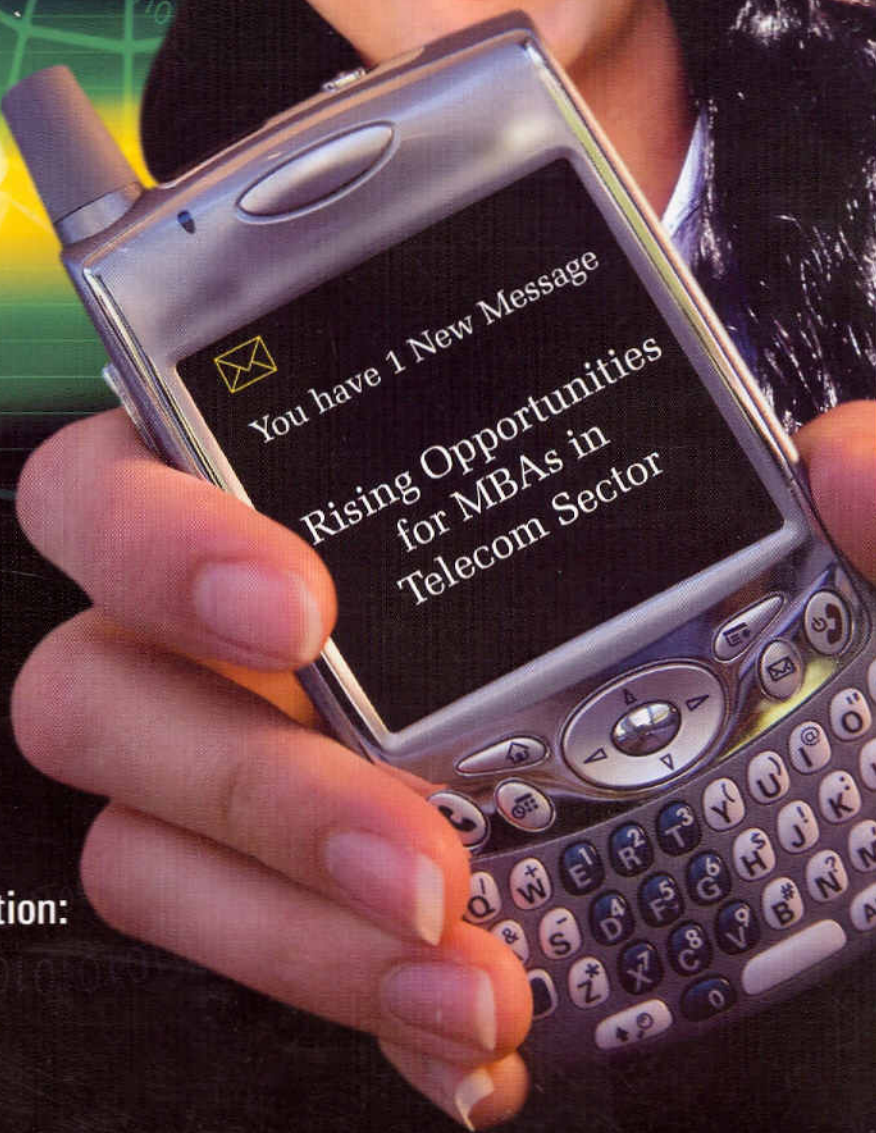
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